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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 SANAA 000166

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SANAA RESPONSE TO NEXT STEPS ON U.S. - MIDDLE EAST
PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE (MEPI)

REF: A. SECSTATE 15081

[1](#)B. SANAA 96

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: As the least developed country in the NEA region, Yemen is likely to show rapid, tangible results from well-conceived MEPI-funded programming. The ROYG has welcomed the initiative warmly and publicly, and Foreign Minister Dr. Abu Bakr Al-Qirbi will send a letter to Secretary Powell in the coming days to welcome MEPI and suggest applications for Yemen. In addition, the imminent return of USAID to Embassy Sanaa will help to ensure that post has the capacity to manage MEPI funds and implement expanded programming effectively.

[1](#)2. (U) Embassy Sanaa is dedicated to the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and has made MEPI an important component of post,s Mission Performance Plan (MPP). In fact, MEPI funding will be critical in achieving the Mission,s strategic goals and objectives in the next few years. Post appreciates the opportunity to provide thoughts as requested in ref A. End Summary.

MEPI Goals and Objectives

[1](#)3. (U) Education reform, economic reform, political reform, digital readiness, and women,s empowerment are very relevant to Yemen and areas where the ROYG is committed to progress. The main obstacle to progress, however, is that Yemen has few resources from which to draw upon in each of these areas and relies heavily on donor assistance.

In education reform, for example, the emphasis would be on literacy and availability of basic education more than on higher education. The objective in E1 referring to promotion of participatory learning and critical thinking skills is better situated to some of the wealthier states in the region than to Yemen.

In economic reform, for example, Yemen is in dire need of technical assistance to strengthen its commercial legal systems and banking systems (ER2). Reform of these systems will not only boost foreign direct investment in Yemen but is also necessary for Yemen,s accession into the WTO and in meeting the criteria of the Millennium Challenge Fund.

In political reform, Yemen's nascent democracy needs the support envisioned under the MEPI goals and objectives, including strengthened political parties, developed local councils, increased women's participation, improved election administration, professionalized media and a reformed judiciary. With continued support, Yemen,s vibrant democracy (Yemen has the most active democracy on the Arabian Peninsula) will be better equipped to face the challenges that lie ahead.

In digital readiness cross-cut, the Ministry of Education lacks the resources to institute multi-media, broadcast, and Internet-based educational programming in the school system (DR3). As such, there is a general lack of information and communication technology knowledge. Fundamental skills, related to digital readiness, must first be developed before a digital marketplace can effectively take root in Yemen.

In women,s empowerment cross-cut, reducing the drop-out rate of adolescent girls combined with women,s literacy programs is an important first step in empowering Yemeni women. In a country where two-thirds of all women are illiterate, basic women,s education programs must be the focus rather than increasing the number of successful female business owners and office holders as stated in WE1 and WE3.

[1](#)4. (U) A central theme of the Post,s MPP is "no security without development, and no development without security." MEPI funding for visible, high-impact programs will thus buttress and help sustain progress on fundamental U.S. counter-terrorism goals in Yemen. The MEPI goals and objectives provide a good framework for helping Post target key sectors and regions for rapid tangible results and maximum impact against the existing support network for

Islamist extremism.

FY 02 Supplemental Notional Program Planning

15. (U) Post would like to enhance its presence in FY 02 programming in region-wide and post-specific programs. For instance, the Incentives Program for Girls to Stay in School is extremely relevant to Yemen, with a girl's illiteracy rate of 67.5%, and Yemen Government institutions are in great need of Information Technology assistance.

16. (U) The Yemen political party and tribal council training program already allocated is vital to Yemen's democratic development. In addition, however, parliamentary elections in April will be the most competitive parliamentary elections since unification in 1990 and could impact negatively on Yemen's political reform efforts. A vigorous domestic and international election observation effort to increase the confidence of Yemeni citizens in the election process and help alleviate possible violence is vital to the sustainability of democratic progress.

FY ,03 MEPI Proposed Programs

17. Post has developed four program proposals that fit directly with the MEPI goals and is in the process of identifying and developing other programs. The four proposed programs that are being proposed for inclusion in the FY ,03 MEPI program are defined below, with details septels:

Strengthening Education in Rural Areas in Yemen: In-Service training for primary school teachers and administrators in selected underserved and disadvantaged governorates. This program fits directly with the "Education Reform" MEPI goal and its objective to "Expand access to, and quality of, basic formal education, particularly for girls."

Eradicating Women's Illiteracy in Yemen: Providing basic literacy and life skills courses for adult women in selected underserved and disadvantaged governorates. This program fits the "Education Reform" MEPI goal and its objective to "Expand access to, and quality of, basic formal education, particularly for girls."

Providing the Internet to Yemeni High Schools and NGOs: Providing internet classrooms in high schools and access to internet for (mainly women,s) NGOs. This program fits the "Digital Readiness" MEPI cross cutting issue; the "Education Reform" MEPI goal and its objective to "Expand access to, and quality of, basic formal education, particularly for girls." See ref B.

Raising Awareness on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): An activity to encourage the establishment of laws prohibiting the practice of FGM, and increasing the capacity of a Yemeni women,s advocacy NGO, the National Women,s Committee (NWC). This program fits the "Women,s Empowerment" MEPI cross cutting issue, and more specifically, the goal to "Support founding, growth and networking of NGOs advocating equality of women."

Other MEPI Opportunities in Yemen

18. (U) Post has identified other areas in which MEPI can play a significant role. Strategically targeted MEPI-funded programming will play a significant role in ensuring continued and enhanced economic development, political reform and security, which are vital to Yemen's stability, an essential ingredient in the global war on terror.
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